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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN
ARLINGTON BRANCH • ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

3412 N. 15th Street
Arlington, Va. 22201
February 14, 1974

Professor Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
Stanford University
Palo Alto, California

Dear Professor Lederberg:

Rep. Whitten's Subcommittee on Agriculture-Environmental and Consumer Protection has recorded on p.84 of House Report 93-275, June 12, 1973, the following: "Dr. Joshua Lederberg, Nobel Prize winning scientist, clearly pointed out the dilemma toward which we are headed when he warned that the day is rapidly approaching when the Delaney clause, in its present form, will require the removal of some basic staple from the food supply."

The National Academy of Sciences report on the Academy Forum entitled "How Safe is Safe? The Design of Policy on Drugs and Food additives" has not been published. Since I have not been able to obtain a copy of this report and thus read your statement within the context of the Forum, I would be most appreciative if you would give a specific example of some basic staple which could be removed from the food supply by the Delaney clause as it now stands.

According to the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, as I interpret it, the Delaney clause refers only to food additives which are intentionally added to the food supply. The Delaney clause, by stating "That no additive shall be deemed to be safe if.....", must be subject to the definition of "food additive" as it occurs in Sec. 201 (s) of the Act. This section defines a food additive as "any substance the intended use of which results or may reasonably be expected to result, directly or indirectly in its becoming a component or otherwise affecting the characteristics of any food..." (underling mine). The term is further defined in the Act to exclude pesticide chemicals in or on raw agricultural commodities.

Contamination of the food supply by a naturally occurring carcinogen, such as aflatoxin, does not appear to be affected by the Delaney clause.

I fail to see how the Delaney clause could be an unwarranted threat to a basic staple of the food supply. If such a threat materialized, it would force serious study of alternatives to intentional use of particular carcinogens with particular staples. Extraordinary justification could conceivably lead to exceptions to the law "where contamination of an environmental source by a carcinogen has been proven to be unavoidable...No such instances of 'extraordinary justification' have yet been presented or documented." (House Hearings before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs-Part 4B-Food Additives-p.1283).

I am most appreciative that you have involved yourself in the thinking on the Delaney legislation. Your opinions carry considerable weight with the public, myself included. I hope you will bear with me if I fail to follow your reasoning on certain points. I feel I must persist in trying to understand all viewpoints so that the real issues involved in this piece of legislation can be identified.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty Rae Stevick".

Betty Rae Stevick
(Mrs. E.W.)

Chairman, Health Task Group
Arlington Branch, AAUW